

# **A NOVA AGENDA PARA O DESENVOLVIMENTO E A REFORMA DO SISTEMA DE DESENVOLVIMENTO DAS NAÇÕES UNIDAS**

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*O presente trabalho está redigido em inglês dado ter sido a língua utilizada diariamente durante o estágio e os documentos consultados serem disponibilizados maioritariamente em inglês.*

*To my grandmother Josélia*

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# **A NOVA AGENDA PARA O DESENVOLVIMENTO E A REFORMA DO SISTEMA DE DESENVOLVIMENTO DAS NAÇÕES UNIDAS**

## **THE NEW DEVELOPMENT AGENDA AND THE REFORM OF THE UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM**

**SOFIA FRAGATEIRO DE CAMPOS ROSADO**

### **[RESUMO]**

Com a adoção da Agenda 2030 que definiu as metas de desenvolvimento para os próximos 15 anos, as Nações Unidas e os seus Estados-Membros consideraram que é necessário ajustar a forma como a ONU tem abordado as questões de desenvolvimento de forma a garantir que está "apta para o seu propósito". No contexto do meu estágio na Missão Portuguesa na sede das Nações Unidas em Nova Iorque realizado entre Janeiro e Junho de 2016, este relatório analisa a evolução da agenda para o desenvolvimento no âmbito das Nações Unidas, concentrando-se nos Objetivos de Desenvolvimento do Milénio e nos Objetivos de Desenvolvimento Sustentável. Reflete também sobre as mudanças indispensáveis no Sistema de Desenvolvimento das Nações Unidas de forma a poder responder aos novos desafios de desenvolvimento, concluindo que o funcionamento atual da ONU não permitirá que a Agenda 2030 seja implementada com sucesso.

### **[ABSTRACT]**

With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda which defined the development goals for the next 15 years, the United Nations and its Member States considered that it is necessary to adjust the way the UN has addressed the development issues in order to ensure that it is "fit for purpose". In the context of my internship at the Portuguese Mission at the United Nations headquarters in New York held between January and June 2016, this report analyzes the evolution of the development agenda at the United Nations, focusing on the Millennium Development Goals and the Sustainable Development Goals. It also reflects on the indispensable changes in the United Nations Development System in order to cope with the new challenges of development, concluding that the current functioning of the UN will not allow the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Desenvolvimento, Nações Unidas, Objetivos de Desenvolvimento do Milénio, Objetivos de Desenvolvimento Sustentável, Reforma.

**KEYWORDS:** Development, United Nations, Millennium Development Goals, Sustainable Development Goals; Reform.

## **List of Abbreviations**

**AAAA** – Addis Ababa Action Agenda  
**DESA** – Department of Economic and Social Affairs  
**ECOSOC** – Economic and Social Council  
**EU** – European Union  
**EUDEL** – European Union Delegation  
**FUR** – Follow-up and Review  
**G77** – Group of 77 and China  
**GNI** – Gross National Income  
**GSDR** - Global Sustainable Development Report  
**HLPF** – High Level Political Forum  
**IAEG** – Inter-Agency and Expert Group  
**IPoA** – Istanbul Plan of Action  
**ITA** – Independent Team of Advisors  
**LDCs** – Least Developed Countries  
**LLDCs** – Land Locked Developing Countries  
**MDGs** – Millennium Development Goals  
**MIC** - Middle-Income Country  
**MTR** – Midterm Review  
**NGOs** – Non-Governmental Organizations  
**ODA** – Official Development Assistance  
**PR** - Permanent Representative  
**QCPR** – Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review  
**SDGs** – Sustainable Development Goals  
**SIDS** – Small Island Developing States  
**UN** – United Nations  
**UNDP** – United Nations Development Programme  
**UNDS** – United Nations Development System  
**UNGA** – United Nations General Assembly

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## **Introduction**

### **Purpose of the Study**

In September 2015, at the High-level meetings of the 70<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted by the Member States of the United Nations (UN). Three other major agreements were signed that year: Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA), Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Paris Agreement.

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda marked the end of the 15-year period following the implementation of the Millennium Declaration, the first global concrete agenda set to tackle the core development issues, initiating a new approach to development for the United Nations.

The 2030 Agenda had just been adopted when I made my proposal for the internship report to the Universidade Nova de Lisboa in September 2015. I intended to focus on the evolution between the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), within the context of International Relations, and reflect on the reasons behind the “bold and transformative steps” (UNGA, 2015) that the United Nations proposed to take in the solving of the core global development problems.

To ground my research, I enrolled in a five months internship with the Portuguese Mission to the United Nations in New York from January to June 2016. Under the supervision of the Deputy Permanent Representative Dra. Cristina Pucarinho, I assisted Dr. Jorge Castelbranco in the Second Committee that addresses issues related with economic growth and development, now framed by the 2030 Agenda.

In March 2016, Anthony Banbury, former United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for field support, published an article in the New York Times in which he addressed what he considered the “colossal mismanagement” of the United Nations, with “bureaucracy maddeningly complex”. Banbury criticized the lack of accountability, the politicization of the decisions, the bureaucracy slowing down processes and also took note of the continuous abuse in peacekeeping missions.

After my five month internship, and in the light of Banbury (2016) criticism, it was clear that I also needed to explore the UN system, in particular the UN Development System (UNDS), since it needs deep structural changes to be an “adequately resourced, relevant, coherent, efficient and effective” (UNGA, 2015a) structure in order to respond to the post-2015 development agenda.

### **Problem Formulation**

The opportunity to find myself at the center of the debate of the 2030 Agenda by being present at the UN Headquarters gave me a deeper insight on the issue I intended to cover. Having direct access to the process of the reform of the UN system and of the UNDS encouraged me to expand my research.

Therefore, I decided to focus on the changes within the United Nations approach to achieve development worldwide, by analyzing the Millennium Development Goals and the Sustainable Development Goals. And, with the understanding that the UN system is not ‘fit for purpose’, I also focused on the ways the UN are adapting and restructuring the organization to the new framework for development established by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

### **Report Structure**

This internship report will be organized in three main chapters aiming to balance the theoretical framework, the critical insight and my internship experience.

The first chapter will frame the study object within social sciences and international relations theory, aiming to define the concepts of globalization, security and development. It will also describe the organization of the main bodies and functions of the UN in order to provide a conceptual and practical framework for a full assessment of the context in which the problem formulation is inserted.

The following chapter will focus on contextualizing the framework for development within the United Nations in the two past decades. The first section will explore the UNDS and its roles and functions. The second section will focus on

the first UN development agenda - the MDGs- by analyzing its achievements and failures. The last section of the second chapter will target the 2030 Agenda by discussing the implementation and monitoring processes, as well as identifying some critical approaches.

The third and last chapter will focus on my internship experience – tasks and experiences - with five subsequent sections about the main meetings I assisted with and also on how this experience helped me to discover the appropriate answers to the questions I wanted to raise since the beginning of this study.

The report will end with a summary of conclusions on the remarks made during the internship and subsequent research.

## 1. Conceptual Framework

### 1.1 Background of the Study

According to the report *Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds*, by 2030 the world as we know it will have changed substantially (National Intelligence Council, 2012). In 1987, the Brundtland Report *Our Common Future* recorded a world population of 5 billion (UN, 1987). In 2011, the number had grown to 7 billion and the prediction for 2024 is of 8 billion (Sachs, 2012). This unprecedented population growth coupled with the phenomenon of globalization<sup>1</sup> of the last three decades has created an unprecedented impact on Earth's resources, ecosystems and societies.

In parallel, in the early 90's, Booth wrote that "our words don't work anymore" (1991: 313). He noted that the traditional thinking in international relations refers to concepts like 'sovereignty', 'states' and 'the superpowers' that are no longer as appropriate in today's world as they were in the past. The evolution of concepts and of their applicability in different times, reflect the permanent dynamic and constant need for update of the International Relations discipline.

Globalization has allowed, or requested, a different way to organize and exercise power in the world. As noted by Georg Sørensen, "modernizing states – such as China – know that the road to greatness involves focus on manufacture upgrading and deep involvement in economic globalization; by no means does it involve territorial conquest and militarization" (Sørensen, 2011: 119).

Moreover, the "institution of inter-state war, which has been the core of International Relations theories, is in historic decline" (Booth, 1991: 316). Military threats continue to be an important part of the security issues but their role is being diminished and new threats such as economic collapse, human rights, scarcity, climate change, terrorism, crime, amongst others are now co-existing alongside (Booth, 1991: 318). The understanding of these new threats has led to the expansion of the concept of security, from a purely state security approach to the inclusion of the safety of individuals (Booth, 1991). As Booth noted:

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<sup>1</sup> By globalization I mean the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa (Giddens, 1990: 64).

‘Security’ means the absence of threats. Emancipation is the freeing of people (as individuals and groups) from those physical and human constraints which stop them carrying out what they would freely choose to do. War and the threat of war is one of those constraints together with poverty, poor education, political oppression and so on. [...] Emancipation, not power or order, produces true security. Emancipation theoretically is security. (1991: 319).

The postmodernist approach to Security described by Booth – ‘Human Security’ - was defined by the UN Development Programme<sup>2</sup> (UNDP) as worries about daily life such as job security, income security, health security, environmental security and security from crime, (UNDP, 1994), lending less space to cataclysmic world events. Within the new concept, the role of State and warfare decreases but is not eliminated and attention is given to social forces and processes by understanding the social and political side as a whole in a continuous process of change (Cox, 1981).

Critical Studies in International Relations theory have been able to recognize this expansion of boundaries of the political community and the increased influence of subnational groups and regions shifting the power to local, regional and transnational structures (Linklater, 1996). They have also witnessed the changing of the nature of the actors involved, with the presence of non-state entities, with an extended range of stakes (low and high politics), and a greater diversity of goals pursued (Cox, 1981).

The concept of ‘security’ within Critical Studies has been challenged for not being sharp enough since it encompasses everything that threatens humans, individually or collectively. In fact, Baldwin (1997) argued that it is a multidimensional concept, whether it is economic security, environmental security, identity security, social security, food security, military security, amongst others, they are only expressions of different forms of security and not different concepts of the term.

No matter the lack of consensus around the definition of ‘security’, the broadening of the term in International Relations has led States into being

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<sup>2</sup> The Department of Economic and Social Affairs is the Secretariat entity responsible for the development pillar of the United Nations. The position works closely with governments and stakeholders to help countries around the world meet their economic, social and environmental goals.

concerned with the reduction “of poverty and improve the welfare and security of the world’s poor while protecting the natural resources and ecosystems that development practices often overexploit and damage” (Matthew & Hammill, 2009: 1118) in order to avoid conflicts and preserve the ‘status quo’.

It is from the understanding of the need for human security and empowerment and emancipation of human beings that the concept of ‘development’ emerged. The main approach to ‘development’ in the 1980’s looked exclusively at the links between income growth and the subsequent human progress, however, with the growing criticism of those focal points, the concept of ‘human development’ emerged (Champalimaud, 2014). In 1990, UNDP used the concept of ‘human development’ and defined it as “a process of enlarging people's choices” (UNDP, 1990: 10) adding that:

Human development has two sides: the formation of human capabilities - such as improved health, knowledge and skills - and the use people make of their acquired capabilities - for leisure, productive purposes or being active in cultural, social and political affairs. If the scales of human development do not finely balance the two sides, considerable human frustration may result. (UNDP, 1990: 10)

UNDP proceeded with the creation of the Human Development Index that measures the health, education and standard of living conditions by assessing life expectancy at birth, expected years of schooling for children of school entering age, gross national income per capita, etc. However, it does not mirror inequalities, poverty, human security or empowerment, which is clearly a work in process.

In parallel to the aforementioned concept, ‘sustainable development’ emerged as the ideal tool to manage the interconnected crises in order to prevent global catastrophes. In 1987, the Brundtland Report defined ‘sustainable development’ as:

Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It contains within it two key concepts: the concept of needs, in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs. (UN, 1987)

Considering that the consequences of conflicts and tensions are global, to achieve security there is the need for a rapid cooperative action (Xavier, 2010: 113) since “it is less costly and more humane to meet these threats upstream rather than downstream, early rather than late. [Recognizing that] short-term humanitarian assistance can never replace long-term development support” (UNDP, 1994: 3).

To address this, ‘Development Cooperation’ has been the answer. And even though it is an evolving and dynamic process, it can be defined as an activity that meets the following criteria: “1) Aims explicitly to support national or international development priorities; 2) Is not driven by profit; 3) Discriminates in favour of developing countries; 4) Is based on cooperative relationships that seek to enhance developing country ownership” (Alonso & Glennie, 2015).

Development cooperation has also emerged from the idea that “the defense of the individual is no longer seen as a natural prerogative of the sovereign nation-state to be taken potentially as a responsibility of the international community as a whole”<sup>3</sup> (Xavier 2010: 98). It is between the need for order and cooperation between States and the above expressed idea of common responsibility that International Institutions, such as the UN, have served as tools to manage and achieve security and development.

## **1.2. The United Nations**

The United Nations is an intergovernmental organization, created in 1945 as the descendant of the League of Nations in the aftermath of World War II. The organization intended to promote international cooperation in order to prevent other similar conflicts. Since, the organization has evolved to take action on issues such as peace and security, climate change, sustainable development, human rights, disarmament, terrorism, humanitarian and health emergencies, gender equality, governance, food production, and other issues that may develop into worldly concerns.

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<sup>3</sup> Free translation by the author.

With its headquarters in New York, the UN started with 51 original members and is currently made up of 193 Member States. As shown in Figure 1 [see Appendix, p. 61], its main bodies are the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the Trusteeship Council, the International Court of Justice and the Secretariat.

The UNGA is the main deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the UN where each Member State has one vote. When deciding on matters of peace and security, admission of new members and budgetary matters, it requires a two-thirds majority for the adoption of resolutions. Decisions on other subjects are made by simple majority.

The Security Council is the main body of the UN and is responsible for the preservation of international peace and security. Even though it is composed of 15 members, all Member States are obliged to comply with the Council decisions. With 15 members, each with one vote, five Member States reserve a permanent seat at the council and hold veto power. Of the ten non-permanent members, three must be from the African Group, three from the Asia-Pacific Group, two from the Eastern European Group, two from the Latin American and Caribbean States and five from Western European and Others Groups.

Another organ is the ECOSOC, the central platform for fostering debate and innovative thinking, in view of reaching consensus on ways forward, and coordinating efforts to achieve internationally agreed goals. It is responsible for coordinating the economic, social and related work of 14 UN agencies, their functional commissions and five regional commissions. It has 54 non-permanent members, representing the five regional groups, which are elected by the UNGA for overlapping three-year terms.

In addition, the Trusteeship Council was assigned the task of supervising the administration of the Trust Territories, either mandates that remained from the League of Nations or territories taken from nations defeated at the end of World War II. With all of the territories attaining independence, the Council suspended its



operations in 1994. Today, the chamber itself is used for other meetings namely related to the 2030 Agenda, negotiation of documents and conferences.

The International Court of Justice is the main judicial organ, headquartered in the Hague (Netherlands). Its role is to settle, in accordance with international law, legal disputes submitted by States and to advise on legal questions by authorized United Nations organs and specialized agencies. It is composed of 15 judges, elected by the UNGA and the Security Council.

Finally, the Secretariat, led by the Secretary-General, carries out the day-to-day work of the UN as mandated by the UNGA, the main deliberative organ, and other main organs of the UN. The job of the Secretary-General is more complex than just being a CEO (Chief Executive Officer), since he is only a *primus inter pares*, with UN specialized agencies that are independently funded and managed, answering only to their own governors and donors. It is within his duties to be a symbol of the UN ideals and a spokesman for the interests of the world's people, especially the most vulnerable.

With its headquarters in New York City, the UN also has three major UN office sites where various affiliated agencies have a joint presence. The first agency is in Geneva (Switzerland), and deals mainly with issues of peace, development and human rights; the Nairobi (Kenya) Office hosts UNEP<sup>4</sup> and UN-Habitat<sup>5</sup>; and the third, located in Vienna (Austria), hosts many different agencies and is closely associated with UNODC<sup>6</sup>.

The UN conducts daily debates and deliberations that are attended by Member State diplomats that should have representation in the main six committees: 1) Disarmament and International Security Committee; 2) Economic and Financial

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<sup>4</sup> The United Nations Environment Programme is the leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda, promotes the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the United Nations system and serves as an authoritative advocate for the global environment.

<sup>5</sup> The United Nations Human Settlements Programme is the UN programme that works to promote socially and environmentally sustainable human settlements development and the achievement of adequate shelter for all.

<sup>6</sup> The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime was born of the merging of the UN Drug Control Programme and the Centre for International Crime Prevention in 1997, and works in the fight against illicit drugs and international crime.

Committee; 3) Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee; 4) Special Political and Decolonization Committee; 5) Administrative and Budgetary Committee; and 6) Legal Committee.

The UN is still the primary figure within the international community playing a big role in keeping peace and security, pushing forward development and by providing humanitarian assistance. However, after 70 years, the UN has gained urgency to reform in order to continue to create the solutions for the issues that affect nowadays societies (Ferro, 2016).

Browne & Weiss (2016) considered that the UN system can be characterized by five kinds of weaknesses: 1) Competition with alternative sources of funds and expertise; 2) Lack of coherence; 3) Co-optation, as the way the UNDS is tied to donor conditions and earmarked funding); 4) Lack of capacity to deal with the new framework for sustainable development; and 5) Complacency with members from the civil service that don't seem to recognize that there is a crisis. Taking into account that 2016 is the first year of implementation of the 2030 Agenda along with its "sister" conferences (AAAA and Paris Agreement), and together with the elections for the new Secretary-General (Ferro, 2016), the need to reform is bigger than ever.

The following section of this report will focus on the UNDS and how the UN system articulates with the development agenda since the Millennium Declaration.

## **2. Making the United Nations Development System ‘Fit for Purpose’**

### **2.1. The United Nations Development System**

The term ‘UN Development System’ was first used in 1969 in *A Study of the Capacity of the United Nations Development System*, a research initiated by Paul Hoffman, Administrator of UNDP at the time, as a follow-up to an earlier review of the pre-investment needs for developing countries.

The 1969 study proposed to look at all the UN sources of development assistance, defining the ‘UNDS’ as covering:

The organs of the United Nations including UNICEF and WFP and the professional and technical secretariats which serve them and the Specialized Agencies concerned in the promotion of economic and social development. Where the IBRD and IMF are included, this is specifically indicated. Because the inherent indivisibility capacity has been accentuated in the case of UNDP by the practice of operating indirectly through other arms of the UN development system, it would have been impossible to carry out the Study by examining UNDP only. For this reason, all the various components and inter-relationships of the UN development system had to be considered as a whole. (as cited in Burley & Lindores, 2016: 2)

Most of the recommendations of the 1969 Capacity Study were not accepted by the Member States and the term ‘UNDS’ was not greatly used for the next two decades (Burley & Lindores, 2016).

Coined two decades before, the expression ‘UNDS’ gained popularity since the 1990’s and was defined in the Background Note for the ECOSOC Dialogue on the longer-term positioning of the UNDS as “the entities that receive contributions for operational activities for development” (ITA, 2015: 16) [see Appendix, Figure 2, p. 62]. Nevertheless, Burley and Lindores still consider it to be “vague and undetermined [...] without any firm legal, political or managerial definition” (2016: 3).

The UNDS, as defined by the Independent Team of Advisors (ITA), undertakes the ‘operational activities’ that account for about 60% of total annual UN spending (ITA, 2016a), employing around 80,000 people, a majority of the organization’s full-time staff, and it includes more than 30 organizations between funds, programmes, offices and agencies (Browne & Weiss, 2016). ECOSOC has been the main stage for

the issues concerning the UNDS. On its programmatic cycle, besides the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) and the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR), we can also find:

- Annual Ministerial Review, held annually, that assesses progress in the implementation of the United Nations development agenda;
- Development Cooperation Forum (DCF), that reviews trends and progress in development cooperation on a biannual basis;
- Integration Segment, held annually since 2014, that promotes the balanced integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development both within the UN system and beyond;
- Operational Activities for Development Segment, held annually, that provide overall coordination and guidance for UN funds and programmes on a system-wide basis;
- Coordination and Management Meetings, held throughout the year, that review the reports of its subsidiary and expert bodies, promoting system-wide coordination and reviewing development issues;
- Youth Forum, held annually since 2012, that brings the voice of youth into the discussion of the MDGs and post-2015 development agenda;
- Partnership Forum, held annually and linked to the theme of the Council's Annual Ministerial Review, that aims at finding innovative ways to collaborate with the private sector and foundations in search of solutions for the many development challenges facing governments today.

As will be further developed in chapter 2.3.1., the UN Member States requested an ECOSOC Dialogue on the Longer-term Positioning of the UNDS in view of ensuring a development system that is fit to deliver on the 2030 Agenda. The need for such dialogue reveals that the development system is not working and that a reform is needed in order to successfully respond to the new development framework.

Amongst the reasons for the current inefficiency of the UNDS is the duplication of work via parallel processes, which also has a deep impact on the financing by

unnecessarily duplicating resources. There is also the making of decisions without country specific policies, that presented set backs in their results.

The funding of the UNDS has also revealed to be insufficient to respond to the needs of development. Currently, the funding is unstable and unpredictable which is greatly connected with the aforementioned 'bilateralization of multilateral aid'<sup>7</sup> and the fragmentation and competition between agencies.

The UN development operations are essentially funded by Official Development Assistance<sup>8</sup> (ODA). In 2014 the UNDS had collectively spent [US]\$20.0 billion to support development, being that 54% was for development and 48% for humanitarian assistance related activities (ITA, 2016a). The value is in addition to [US]\$8.5 billion that the UNDS entities spent at the global and regional level to support the normative and operational mandates (ITA, 2016a). However, the issue lies on the quantity *versus* quality of the ODA and if the UNDS is truly being effective, which can also be proven difficult when there is lack of monitoring and consequent accountability.

Lastly, it is recognized that ODA had a central role in assisting developing countries achieving the MDGs (MDG Gap Task Force, 2015). Yet, due to the emergence of alternative sources of funding, the UN currently accounts for only 14% of the total global ODA (Browne & Weiss, 2016). Hence, there is the need to rethink the UNDS in order to keep the UN as a relevant agent in the field of development.

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<sup>7</sup> ITA (2016a) found that 84% of the UNDS expenditures in 2014 were funded with voluntary and earmarked resources.

<sup>8</sup> OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) defines ODA as "those flows to countries and territories on the DAC List of ODA Recipients and to multilateral institutions which are: 1) *provided by official agencies*, including state and local governments, or by their executive agencies; and 2) each transaction of which: a) is administered with the promotion of the economic development and welfare of developing countries as its main objective; and b) is concessional in character and conveys a grant element of at least 25 per cent (calculated at a rate of discount of 10 per cent). The DAC List of ODA includes all low- and middle-income countries (as defined by the World Bank, based on Gross National Income (GNI) per capita, except for those that are members of the G8 or the European Union. In addition, the list separately includes all LDCs as defined by the UN. Retrieved August 19, 2016 from <http://www.oecd.org/dac/stats/officialdevelopmentassistancedefinitionandcoverage.htm#Definition> More on the DAC List of ODA Recipients consult <http://www.oecd.org/dac/stats/daclist.htm> Retrieved August 19, 2016

## **2.2. The United Nations Development Agenda: Achievements and Failures of the MDGs**

In September 2000 the Member States of the United Nations gathered at the Millennium Summit and adopted the Millennium Development Goals through the Millennium Declaration<sup>9</sup>. Member States vowed to achieve by 2015 eight development goals [see Appendix, Figure 3, p. 63 & Table 1, p. 68], with 21 associated targets and 60 official indicators to measure the progress of the goals: 1) Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; 2) Achieve universal primary education; 3) Promote gender equality and empower women; 4) Reduce child mortality; 5) Improve maternal health; 6) Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases; 7) Ensure environmental sustainability; and 8) Create a global partnership for development (UNGA, 2000). The MDGs expressed a wide public concern with poverty, hunger, disease, gender inequality, subpar schooling and environmental degradation.

The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015, that reviews the progress made in the eight MDGs with data going back to 1990 to 2015, concluded that the MDGs resulted in profound achievements: 1) Globally, since 1990 the number of people living in extreme poverty declined by more than half; 2) The primary school net enrollment rate in the developing regions has reached 91% in 2015, up from 83% in 2000; 3) 90% of countries have more women in parliament since 1995; 4) The global under-five mortality rate has declined by more than half; 5) The maternal mortality ratio has declined by 45% worldwide since 1990; 6) New HIV infections fell by approximately 40% between 2000 and 2013; 7) Globally, 147 countries have met the drinking water target, 95 countries met the sanitation target and 77 countries have met both; and 8) ODA from developed countries increased by 66% in real terms between 2000 and 2014 (UN, 2015).

The same report also recognizes that inequalities persist and that the progress was uneven, with the majority of developing countries not meeting many of the goals, and with biased results due to the rapid progress of development in China and Asia (Clemens, Kenny & Moss, 2007).

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<sup>9</sup> Adoption of the resolution A/RES/55/2 by UNGA on September 18, 2000.

The data collected by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group (IAEG) on the MDG Report 2015 notes that the world's impoverished remain overwhelmingly concentrated in Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, that gender inequality persists, that there is still a big gap between poor and rich and between urban and rural, and that conflict persists along with the presence of poverty, hunger and lack of access to basic services (UN, 2015). It also highlights that climate change and environmental degradation undermines the progress achieved in the past decades (UN, 2015).

Taking these findings into consideration, the report considers that the new agenda for development should better meet the human needs and the requirements of economic transformations while protecting environment, ensuring peace and the realization of human rights, along with a data revolution, that provides access to better data in policy making and monitoring to development, and stronger political commitment with the increasing of resources.

The ability to properly assess the effects of the MDGs has also been hampered with the absence of measurable criteria for some goals (Xavier, 2015). Contributing to the problem is the inadequate data collection, imprecise qualitative assessment of the goals impact, and by correlating all of the progress as an impact of the MDGs commitments (Miller-Dawkins 2014) disregarding parallel development processes. Prominent researchers have found that the accelerations in development tended to occur before the MDGs, being that the majority of progress under Goal 1 is based on development achieved in East Asia, particularly China, and not equally shared by developing countries (Friedman, 2013).

Other authors, as Jeffrey Sachs (2012), have considered that the shortfall of the MDGs represents a set of operational failures, like the lack of intermediate objectives that didn't ensure a more intimate feedback between policies and outcomes. Also that outdated data, untimely and/or not available to policy makers, managers and to the public and the lack of engagement with the private sector have contributed to the failing of several goals. The targeting of mainly poor countries, whereas rich countries would voluntarily add their solidarity and assistance via finance and technology transfer. This has also been considered to be an unrealistic view on funding, with promises of ODA unkept (Sachs, 2012).

Miller-Dawkins (2014) recalls that the MDGs were established through a bureaucratic and technocratic process, with lack of universality, and built over the notion that development occurs primarily through the transfer of resources from North to South. The author also recognizes that the goals were measured with a focus on getting children to school instead of the learning outcomes for the child – quantity over quality (Miller-Dawkins, 2014).

Catarina de Albuquerque<sup>10</sup> in her statement to the 68<sup>th</sup> session of the UNGA<sup>11</sup> noted that “the biggest blind-spot of the current global development agenda – the MDGs – is the silence regarding inequalities, adding that equality is not an automatic outcome of conventional development practices”. Albuquerque insisted that the elimination of inequalities needed to be integrated across the new development framework.

In view of the above critiques, several researchers have presented what they believe to be strengths of the MDGs and which the new development agenda should take in consideration:

- Sachs (2012) considered that the Millennium goals had three main strengths: 1) They were easy to state with eight simple goals that fitted in one poster; 2) They were not legally binding, but a set of moral and practical commitments; and 3) They could be pursued through practical and specific measures adopted by governments, business, and civil society;
- Clemens, Kenny and Moss (2007) suggested that the next round should: 1) Be country specific and more flexible; 2) Take historical performance into account; 3) Focus more on intermediate targets than outcomes; and 4) Be considered benchmarks to spur action. Also, taking into consideration the concerning and undergoing climate change, environmental objectives should have a higher profile alongside the poverty-reduction objectives.

It is clear that, despite its weaknesses and the existent room for improvement, the Millennium development agenda was a crucial tool in development worldwide.

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<sup>10</sup> Former Special Rapporteur on the Human Right to Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation.

<sup>11</sup> Statement to the 68<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly, Third Committee Item # 69 (b,c). Retrieved September 9, 2016 from <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=14236&LangID=E#sthash.pVfXRBx.dpuf>



The experience with the MDGs has also granted the UN with the opportunity to build upon the achievements and failures of the previous development goals to create a new development agenda that can perhaps be considered more successful.

### **2.3. The United Nations Development Agenda: the post-2015 Development Agenda**

Following the outcome of the 2010 High-level Plenary Meeting of the UNGA on the Millennium Development Goals, the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon established the UN System Task Team in September 2011 to support UN system-wide preparations for the post-2015 UN development agenda, in consultation with all stakeholders. The Task Team, co-chaired by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)<sup>12</sup> and UNDP, brought together senior experts from over fifty UN entities and international organizations to provide system-wide support to the post-2015 consultation process, including analytical input, expertise and outreach.

In June 2012, the UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda published the report *Realizing the Future We Want for All* in which it defined three fundamental principles to the new framework - Human rights, Equality and Sustainability - and four core dimensions - inclusive social development, environmental sustainability, inclusive economic development and peace and security - for the post-2015 era.

Following the report and through a wide consultation process with different stakeholders, in September 2015, the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit adopted<sup>13</sup> a new framework to guide development efforts between 2015 and 2030.

The post-2015 development agenda, titled *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development*, highlighted five areas of intervention: 1) Concerning the people – end poverty and hunger, ensuring dignity and equality, in a healthy environment; 2) Concerning the planet – protect from degradation, with sustainable consumption and production and sustainable management of natural

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<sup>12</sup> The Department of Economic and Social Affairs is the Secretariat entity responsible for the development pillar of the United Nations. It works closely with governments and stakeholders to help countries around the world meet their economic, social and environmental goals.

<sup>13</sup> Adoption of the resolution A/RES/70/1 by UNGA on September 25, 2015.

resources, while taking urgent action on climate change; 3) Promoting prosperity through fulfilling lives and economical, social and technological progress in harmony with nature; 4) Ensuring peace in a world free from fear and violence; and 5) Revitalizing a global partnership for sustainable development.

The above intervention areas were translated in the creation of 17 Sustainable Development Goals [see Appendix, Figure 4, p. 63 & Table 2, p. 68] with 169 targets attached, picking up where the MDGs left off while reflecting a paradigm shift in the way the world is organized.

In the report of the Secretary-General on the follow-up and review process of the 2030 Agenda, it is said that the new development Agenda addresses “in an integrated manner, the social, economic and environmental dimensions of development, their interrelations, aspects related to peaceful societies and effective institutions, as well as means of implementation [finance, technology, capacity development etc.]” (UN, 2016a).

The principle of interrelation considers that for a global problem there is the need for a global problem-solving network. And, in the context of the implementation of the Agenda, it implies using different fora like the United Nations system, governments, private sector, civil society, and others to achieve success. The Agenda is also based on the principle of interconnectedness, where the success of one SDG depends on the success of the others, and the achievement of the goal relies on good governance, be it local, national, regional or global and requires all stakeholders to partner.

Keeping the voluntary commitment of the previous UN development agenda, the SDG implementation is based on country ownership, emphasizing that Member States should adopt their national plans and legislations to work towards achieving the SDGs, keeping in mind the specificities of the country. It also seems that the UN, considering the lessons learned from the MDGs, are adopting the targets as symbols of the kinds of outcomes towards which the development community should strive – a tool – instead of a practical target that each country has to achieve (Clemens, Kenny & Moss, 2007). As Sachs (2012) noted, the MDGs served as incentive generators to improve performance, and the same can be applied to the 2030 Agenda.

The 2030 Agenda also has a broader focus to achieve development by aiming at all the countries, wealthy and impoverished including the marginalized in middle and high-income countries, so that many of the rich countries had already achieved the purposed goals by the MDGs and had few left to be accomplished. The new agenda brings to the forefront new issues where developed countries still have much to do, such as sustainable and resilient food production (Target 2.4) and the eradication of modern slavery (Target 8.7) where companies based in developed States still play a big role (Ross & Morgan, 2015).

The last innovation of the new agenda that I would like to mention concerns the means of implementation. With several support systems, as will be explained in the next chapter, the 2030 Agenda is sustained by the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on the financing level. Though recalling the need of ODA, the AAAA also refers to the use of domestic resources towards financing the implementation of the Agenda (UNGA, 2015b: 10). During meetings at the ECOSOC Dialogue on Longer-term Positioning of the UNDS, it was suggested that UNDS can add to the above options the necessary expertise to serve as a policy adviser and ‘financial broker’ to mobilize the required domestic and external resources, in partnership with other relevant stakeholders.

### **2.3.1. The Challenge of the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda**

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, four major agreements were signed in 2015, with implications to the three aspects of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental), with the 2030 Agenda providing the main framework. Despite the agreements defining “what needs to be done”, there is still a need to clarify “how it is going to get done”, while almost everything remains to be done on the implementation level.

Aware that the process of implementation of the Agenda requires a delicate balance between the ambition of universality, global coordination and national ownership, the UN has organized several initiatives that seek to feed into the roadmap of the Agenda:

1. The implementation will be supported by the Addis Ababa Action Agenda<sup>14</sup>, an agreement that came out of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development Forum, and established a global framework for financing development post-2015. The Action Agenda also provides concrete policies and actions to support the implementation of the new agenda;
2. The Paris Agreement<sup>15</sup> will also help supporting the environment branch of the 2030 Agenda, by setting out a global action plan to put the world on track to avoid dangerous climate change;
3. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction<sup>16</sup> will also support the 2030 Agenda by aiming to avoid losses in lives, and in the economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets of persons, businesses, communities and countries, while creating resilience and sustainability;
4. The Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR) is a United Nations publication aiming to strengthen the science-policy interface at the HLPF, and is the main United Nations platform providing political leadership and guidance on sustainable development issues at the international level. The report is global in coverage and takes into account the perspectives of the five UN regions. It seeks inputs from the UN system, including the Regional Commissions, scientists, government and other stakeholders at all levels;
5. The ECOSOC and UNGA policies for the UNDS are reviewed every four years in the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review. The QCPR process allows the General Assembly to evaluate UN effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and impact in helping developing countries meet their sustainable development needs. Being that ECOSOC provides overall guidance for these

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<sup>14</sup> Adoption of the resolution A/RES/69/313 by UNGA on August 17, 2015.

<sup>15</sup> The Paris Agreement is a binding treaty to enter into force by 2020, in order to avoid dangerous climate change by limiting global warming to well below 2°C, while also recognizing the role of other stakeholders, including cities, other subnational authorities, civil society, the private sector and others.

<sup>16</sup> The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction is a non-binding 15-year agreement, which recognizes that the State has the primary role to reduce disaster risk but that responsibility should be shared with other stakeholders including local government, the private sector and other stakeholders. It aims for the substantial reduction of disaster risk and losses in lives, livelihoods and health and in the economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets of persons, businesses, communities and countries.

entities, and ensures that the most effective responses are well coordinated. The preparation for the QCPR is led by the Secretary-General, including background analysis based on consultations with governments and UN organizations. In 2014, Member States requested an ECOSOC Dialogue on the Longer-term Positioning of the UNDS<sup>17</sup> to feed into the preparations for the 2016 QCPR resolution for the period of 2016-2019, towards ensuring a development system that is fit to deliver on the 2030 Agenda;

6. The ECOSOC and other UN agencies have promoted several initiatives to discuss how the UN can be more relevant and effective in the field of development, from which I would like to highlight the Integration Segment organized by ECOSOC every year in May, tasked with promoting the integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development both within the United Nations system and beyond.

In a few words, the roadmap that the UN has been defining for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda reveals an intricate process that has the support of several agreements, reports and processes at the UN level. To ensure a successful implementation of the agenda, an outstanding management will be needed at all levels (UN, governments, local authorities, private sector, civil society, etc.). The next section will focus on how the UNDS needs to re-organize and respond to the 2030 Agenda as mentioned in chapter 2.1.

### **ECOSOC Dialogue on Longer-term Positioning of the UNDS**

In preparation for the 2030 Agenda, Member States requested an ECOSOC Dialogue on longer-term positioning of the UNDS under ECOSOC resolution 2014/14. The Council decided to convene a transparent and inclusive dialogue taking into consideration the context of the post-2015 development agenda, including the interlinkages between the alignment of functions, funding practices, governance structures, organizational arrangements, capacity as well as impact and partnership

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<sup>17</sup> Adoption of the resolution E/RES/2014/14 by ECOSOC on July 14, 2014.

approaches, in order to respond to a new, broader and ambitious agenda, establishing a unified, universal and integrated development framework.

This is the first time that ECOSOC has been mandated to conduct such an intergovernmental dialogue in view of reforming the UN development system that is pertinent to discuss in the context of this report.

The dialogue happened via formal and informal sessions, in two phases, over a period of 18 months. The first phase of the Dialogue took place between December 2014 and May 2015 and focused on the evaluation by the Member-States of the UN system's contribution to development. The first phase included three formal sessions, four informal workshops (functions, funding, governance and organizational arrangements, capacity as well as impact and partnership approaches), a civil society briefing, and a high-level retreat. The sessions were open to all Member States and other stakeholders considered relevant by ECOSOC. Background papers were prepared by independent experts, DESA and the UNDG<sup>18</sup> to inform the discussions.

From this first phase, a set of strategic priorities were identified and published by DESA and the Office for ECOSOC Support (2015):

- On functions, it was considered that there are needs to clearly establish what are the UNDS functions in order to translate promises into results. It was noted that the UNDS should focus on the areas where the Organization has comparative advantage *vis-à-vis* other development cooperation actors. The support given at national level must be effective, timely, and adjusted to the context and need of each country. Support should continue to be given to LDCs and low-income countries, but also to middle-income countries and countries affected by humanitarian crisis and conflicts. In addition, there are several areas that have been growing in the work of the UNDS in the past decade and which can be expected to become functions. This includes support to South-South and triangular cooperation, leveraging partnerships for sustainable development, strengthening integrated policy advocacy, and

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<sup>18</sup> The United Nations Development Group unites the UN funds, programmes, specialized agencies, departments, and offices that play a role in development. It serves as a high-level forum for joint policy formation and decision-making.

fostering strategic innovations and learning in development in all country contexts;

- On funding practices<sup>19</sup>, it was recognized that the UNDS activities can't be subordinate to the finance mechanisms and that funding should flow from agreement on functions. It was agreed that alterations need to be done to the funding practices with the goal of improving the quality and predictability of resources, ensuring adequate means and using innovative sources of financing to guarantee the complementary funding. It was also acknowledged that core resources will be vital for UN entities to play their role effectively and that each UN entity needs to improve information flow to Member States on the use of core funding for operational activities. The quality of earmarked funding<sup>20</sup> will also have to be accorded higher priority, which can be achieved by broadening the level at which earmarking is done or by introducing more flexible provisions. With the post-2015 development agenda framework, there is also a greater need of use of integrated financing mechanisms, with inter-agency pooled or joint funding mechanisms at both global and country levels;
- On governance structures, was noted that it is necessary to ensure a coherent strategy of the UNDS by improving and restructuring the existing governance structures both at the central, agency and country levels. Including a more effective division of labor between governance at the strategic level and the management of entities and their activities. At the central level, it implies the strengthening of ECOSOC and HLPF, as well as the review of the methods of works of the UN. At the agencies and country levels there is a need to review the cooperation mechanisms in the light of

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<sup>19</sup> There is growing recognition that the current funding architecture of the UNDS has become too unbalanced, with 75% of total contributions currently in the form of non-core resources, of which some 90% are single-donor and programme and project-specific, thereby leaving only 10 % of non-core funding as pooled. The adoption of the post-2015 development agenda provides a window of opportunity to undertake a comprehensive review of the funding architecture of UN operational activities (DESA & Office for ECOSOC Support, 2015).

<sup>20</sup> Earmarking consists of funds that are set aside to pay for specific projects.

“delivering as one” principle, namely at UNDAF<sup>21</sup> and the Resident Coordinator figure;

- On the organizational arrangements on the ground, they must act in accordance with the needs and priorities of the countries, by enhancing the expertise of senior staff of the United Nations, and responding to the system as a whole and not to the respective agencies. It was recognized that the expertise of the local governments are key to address the issues at the field level. Also, the UNDS must ensure that all agents of development are involved, adjusting their collaboration to the State Members goals. Also, to better implement the development agenda, the UNDS needs a workforce that has the necessary capacities, flexibility, mobility as well as the ability to transcend agency-specific identity and allegiance. It also needs to improve the coherence of results-based management and reporting across entities, along with a view to enable a better measurement of the results of the system as a whole;
- At the level of partnerships, the UNDS needs to improve its capacity to convene multi-sector, issue-based partnerships with strong accountability for results, by fostering greater inclusiveness and facilitating the engagement of a broad range of stakeholders. It was highlighted that the partnerships should not undermine the core programme of the UN, but its primary objective is to augment the Organization’s capacity to contribute to the realization of the development agenda.

To conclude the first phase of the ECOSOC Dialogue, it was established that it is up to the Member States to promote the necessary changes so that the UNDS can adapt to their national priorities, and their respective development plans must be supported on the evidence provided by the appropriate instruments at their disposal, including the GSDR.

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<sup>21</sup> The United Nations Development Assistance Plan is a common business plan for the United Nations agencies and national partners, aligned to the priorities of the host country and the internationally agreed development goals.



The second phase of the Dialogue took place between December 2015 and June 2016 and focused specifically on finding more concrete proposals, taking into consideration the strategic priorities established in the first phase. To support the second phase of the Dialogue, the ECOSOC bureau announced in February the establishment of an ITA<sup>22</sup> with the task of providing recommendations based on strategic analysis and contribute to an informed intergovernmental dialogue. The ITA engaged in a consultative process that ensured the inclusion of the considerations of all stakeholders.

In June, ITA (2016b) submitted a working paper with the findings and conclusions of their work during the second phase of the Dialogue, suggesting recommendations to make the UNDS fit for purpose.

In the 22 pages of the ITA paper we can find a roadmap of concrete proposals for the immediate, near and medium-terms. Amongst the recommendations we can point out: 1) The creation of a full-time ECOSOC President in support of the realization of the 2030 Agenda; 2) The creation of a Sustainable Development Board to enhance system-wide governance of the UNDS; 3) The re-designation of Deputy Secretary-General as Deputy Secretary-General for Sustainable Development; and 4) Comprehensive, external independent review of mandated of UNDS entities as well as mapping of staff capacities (ITA, 2016b).

On the issue of politicization, which is a major concern in the allocation of funds within the UNDS, ITA considered that a new funding architecture “is imperative to ensure the neutrality of policy advice, policy advocacy and data” (2016a: 3).

Having identified the key priorities in the first phase of the dialogue, and with the presentation of a roadmap to implement the ITA proposals, it is up to the Member States to advance on the major task of taking decisions to implement or not ITA recommendations as well as all the proposals made by the panelists and participants during the ECOSOC Dialogue.

### **2.3.2. Follow-Up and Review of the 2030 Agenda**

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<sup>22</sup>For more information on the ITA composition access <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2016/02/un-appoints-independent-advisors-to-support-sustainable-development-goals/> - Retrieved September 9, 2016

The implementation process of the SDGs is a voluntary country led process that takes into account their different and unique realities and levels of development, while respecting their sovereignty and political priorities. Nevertheless, a follow-up and review (FUR) of the 2030 Agenda is crucial to assess the overall progress towards sustainable development, understand what is left to do and point out emerging issues.

In January 2016, the Secretary-General released the report *Critical Milestones towards a Coherent, Efficient, and Inclusive Follow-Up and Review of the 2030 Agenda at the Global Level*, making recommendations and suggestions about the FUR process. It suggests that each country could submit voluntary national reviews, at least twice during the 15-year process. It also makes recommendations on how the UNGA can guarantee the FUR process in a coherent, efficient and inclusive manner (UN, 2016a).

The report further suggests the utilization of the HLPF on Sustainable Development, created in 2012 to facilitate the implementation of Rio+20 agenda, as the United Nations central platform for the FUR of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. The Forum, which adopts a Ministerial Declaration, is expected to provide political leadership, guidance and recommendations on the 2030 Agenda's implementation and follow-up, while keeping track of progress of the SDGs. It should spur coherent policies informed by evidence, science and country experiences, as well as address new and emerging issues.

Taking into consideration the recommendations from the Secretary-General, UNGA has decided that the HLPF, under the auspice of ECOSOC, will convene annually prior to the quadrennial meeting at the UNGA in view of assessing progress, achievements and challenges faced by the Member-States in the implementation process while ensuring that the Agenda remains relevant and ambitious. It welcomes contributions from other organizations and actors outside of the UN as well as from the Regional Commissions<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> In the context of the FUR process of the 2030 Agenda, the Regional Commissions should present an evaluation of the progresses of specific policies of each region to the HLPF and can alert the Forum for emerging issues or gaps in the implementation of measures. The regional perspective will also help in peer learning experience within the region.

At the end of the cycle, two HLPFs will be convened – UNGA and ECOSOC – being that the HLPF at UNGA will take the assessments of the ECOSOC in consideration. The HLPF should have only one negotiated political declaration, covering the different and complementary functions of both sessions when the Forum is convened twice in the same year.

During the time of my internship a final decision on the process of FUR was not accomplished, and the Member States expressed some doubts on how the Secretary-General recommendations were meant to be translated into action. It was then decided that the 2016 HLPF (10 - 19 of July) would work as a trial Forum.

That said, the HLPF 2016 included the voluntary reviews of 22 countries and thematic reviews of progress on the SDGs, including cross-cutting issues, supported by reviews produced by the ECOSOC functional commissions and other inter-governmental bodies and forums.

At the end of July, and in view of facilitating an in-depth review of progress made on all the SDGs in the course of the four-year cycle, it was decided that Goal 1, 2, 3, 5, 9 and 14 would be reviewed in 2017; Goals 6, 7, 11, 12 and 15 in 2018; and Goals 4, 8, 10, 13, 16 in 2019 (UN, 2016b). However, the decision has been challenged by several Member-States considering that it hinders the indivisibility of the 2030 Agenda. Some Member-States have also questioned the need for two HLPFs at the end of every four-year cycle with the argument of duplicating work.

Since the beginning of 2016, ECOSOC has been integrating the principles of the 2030 Agenda in the actions of its subsidiary bodies and has encouraged them to contribute to the FUR and to the implementation of the SDGs.

Entities that do not belong to the UN (as scientists, academia, think tanks, local government, private sector, etc.), can also have their independent FUR processes and are encouraged to communicate the conclusions to the HLPF, under a meticulous process that should guarantee that the FUR reports are consistent with the 2030 Agenda principles.

To help in the monitoring of the targets, a group of 230 global SDG Indicators<sup>24</sup>, proposed by the IAEG, was agreed upon on March 11, 2016. This group of indicators is to be applied globally and do not replace the need for national indicators adapted to the specific realities of the countries.

### **2.3.3. Critiques and Prospects of the SDGs**

Despite the efforts made by the UN in the elaboration of a post-2015 development agenda, lessons learned still arose. This section of the chapter will focus on giving an overview of the main criticisms of the 2030 Agenda, displaying it as the 'seven deadly sins': greed, envy, lust, pride, sloth, gluttony, and wrath. Some of the critiques may be applied only to the UNDS and others to the UN system overall, as is the case of the politicization of interests, the global aid industry, contradictions, and the utilization of obsolete concepts.

#### **Greed: Extensiveness of the Agenda**

The 2030 Agenda is composed of 17 goals with 169 targets contrary to what Sachs (2012) had considered as one of the motives behind the MDGs success - eight simple goals that fitted in one poster. Nonetheless, the agenda reflects the effort to cover the economic, social and environmental concerns of sustainable development, after criticisms of the MDGs for focusing only on some development issues.

The new development framework is also trying to battle the previous UN approach to development with 'one-size-fits-all' solutions. The new agenda, having more targets to choose from encourages Member States to select the ones that better suit their national priorities while allowing better consideration of the local culture and political precepts.

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<sup>24</sup> A Global SDG Indicators Database was created and it provides access to data compiled through the UN System in preparation for the Secretary-General's annual report on "Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals". The database can be accessed at <http://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/database/> - Retrieved September 9, 2016.

Nevertheless, the extensiveness of the new Agenda may incur the risk of “trying to be all things to all people”<sup>25</sup> instead of achieving the commitment to “leave no one behind” (UNGA, 2015a).

### **Envy: Politicization of Interests**

The democratic character of the UN has also been under attack, as expressed by Banbury (2016). The UN is composed of Member States, notwithstanding the nature of their regimes being democratic. The decisions made at the UN are frequently expressions of national government interests instead of the interests of the people of the country.

Political interests have weighed more than the efforts towards development, as is pointed out by an Independent Team of Advisers (ITA) on a paper about the funding system of the UNDS. The team drew attention to what was called the “bilateralization of multilateral aid” where non-core resources are typically determined bilaterally outside the inter-governmental mandates and processes of UNDS entities (ITA, 2016a).

This question of politicization of the funds designated for development, with UN Agencies also competing amongst themselves for financing, can also inhibit the full achievement of the SDGs in areas with less political support by the Member States and cause discomfort amongst the different UN Agencies.

### **Lust: Global Aid Industry**

As Nick Mead (2012) noted, the global financial crisis has focused attention on the debts of the rich countries of the West. However, such countries also have large debts owed to them working as income. The same does not apply to the poorest countries, being that the journalist implies that the crisis is not as deep in rich countries as it is in poorer countries that do not have the revenue of having lent money to other countries.

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<sup>25</sup> ‘Trying to be all things to all people’ has been a recurrent expression used in the interviews with the Secretary-General candidates, as it can be seen in the interview to António Guterres by Time (magazine) in the following link <http://time.com/4415879/qa-with-un-secretary-general-candidate-antonio-guterres/> - Retrieved September 9, 2016

According to Health Poverty Action (2014), along with ten other organizations, [US]\$134 billion flows into the African continent annually in loans, foreign investment and aid, however the continent is losing [US]\$192 billion a year in other resource flows, mainly to the same countries providing aid. Of that flow, [US]\$21 billion are lost in debt payments, often following irresponsible loans. Private banks and other financial institutions borrow money at low interest rates in Europe and United States, looking to make large profits through lending it at much higher interest rates to African governments (Health Poverty Action, 2014).

The 2030 Agenda refers to the use of ODA<sup>26</sup> to assist less developed countries, but it does not state the terms under which it must happen. The lack of guidance in ODA in the context of the Agenda, supported by the AAAA, can encourage the diffusion of the debt crisis dynamics in the poor countries and maintain the cycle of dependence on foreign aid.

Not only as previously stated, ODA has also been confused as a 'direct cash transaction' however large amounts of money never leave the donor countries (Ntale, 2013). Some of the money accounted as ODA can be used to pay the expenses of donor countries with refugees or covering the university fees of students from developing countries and this does not present a short-term development impact as intended by the Agenda.

The expertise of the UN lends it its credibility, but economic interests have prevailed inside the system. Buse and Hawkes (2015) recalled that the UN needs to address the "profit-driven determinants of illness" [such as alcohol, tobacco, salt and sugar, as well as pharmaceutical industry], since profitability has won over development in many circumstances due to politicization.

### **Pride: Contradictions**

Hickel (2015) considers that it was the pursuit of endless industrial growth that has damaged the environment and produced poverty. The new framework for development is focused on achieving sustainable development, expressing concerns

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<sup>26</sup> According to SDG Target 17.2, the Developed Countries have committed to give 0,7% of their GNI for ODA, and LDCs between 0,15% to 0,2% of their GNI (UNGA, 2015a).

over the environment and calling for sustainable consumption and production in the Preamble of the Agenda, however:

The core of the SDG programme for development and poverty reduction relies precisely on the old model of industrial growth — ever-increasing levels of extraction, production, and consumption [with] Goal 8 that calls for 7% annual GDP growth in least developed countries and higher levels of economic productivity across the board (Hickel, 2015).

The Agenda reflects the awareness that the current economic system does not work towards equality, but still fails to address the issues of financial speculation and deregulation of the global markets with the likelihood of hindering the success of the SDGs.

It seems as if the 2030 Agenda is aiming to achieve different results from the MDGs without addressing the root causes of some of those issues or providing guidance on how to revise the system itself.

### **Sloth: Obsolete Concepts**

In a fast changing world concepts and definitions are changing as well. The 2030 Agenda, not even one year after its adoption, already contains an obsolete definition.

Target 1.1. of the 2030 Agenda expects to “eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere [by 2030], currently measured as people living on less than [US]\$1.25 a day”. Whereas only one month after its adoption, the World Bank (2015) updated the international poverty line from [US]\$1.25 a day to [US]\$1.90 a day.

The question remains: how can the Agenda adapt to the evolution of concepts and definitions over the 15-year period of implementation?

Additionally, there is a growing debate around the question as to whether the international poverty line is actually adequate for human substance. As a quantitative measure, the poverty line fails to measure the ‘real poverty’ due to the difficulty to compare prices between countries.

The Report on the World Social Situation “Rethinking Poverty”, amongst other issues that stems from the establishment of an international poverty line, considered that:

Whether the poverty-line budget of the household is enough to cover stipulated basic needs at set levels and in terms of quality norms remains unclear. Being above the poverty line should be enough to prevent primary poverty, but given the way in which the non-food component of the poverty-line budget is estimated, this is not assured (DESA, 2010, 61-62).

Taking into consideration the principles addressed in the 2030 Agenda that recognizes the three dimensions of sustainable development as being integrated and indivisible, it would seem that a multidimensional approach to poverty would be taken, especially after the presentation of the 2010 Development Report that introduced the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) that “complements money-based measures by considering multiple deprivations and their overlap” (UNDP, 2010, 7).

### **Gluttony: Statistical Data**

The FUR process of the Agenda requires quality accessible and timely data collection. To respond to the 230 indicators with quality data, there is a need for improving data disaggregation – by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location, etc. – requiring the collection and treatment of an unprecedented amount of data.

Developed countries already have systems of data collection in place and data collected for many of the SDGs indicators. However developing countries, in particular Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS), have a major task ahead in the improvement of their statistical systems to attain the necessary data gathering.

To address the shortage of statistical data in these countries, capacity building is crucial, but the 2030 Agenda and its subsidiary agreements fail to provide concrete measures on how to build that capacity. And, even with capacity building, the production of all the necessary data may prove to be too much.

### **Wrath: Implementation Concerns**

Norton, Scott, Lucci and Avis (2014), considered four major hurdles in the implementation of the new development Agenda: 1) The ability to keep a coherent



vision while maintaining strong levels of Member State support; 2) Keeping intellectual and policy coherence; 3) Getting the goal and target sets into a shape where they work both individually and together, and are measurable; and 4) The Agenda is not able to present how it will translate into action, considering also the challenges to the architecture and operating process of the follow-up system.

During my internship I also became aware of a series of other concerns related to the implementation process that might cause frictions within the UN and all parties involved.

Firstly, the reasoning that motivated the implementation of some targets, taking into consideration that some targets are irrelevant to the more developed countries. I question if it is reasonable to expect that low-income countries reach the same targets as the developed countries in addition to the targets that only apply to the poorer countries. That said, the developing countries are expected to achieve double the targets than developed countries.

Second, recognizing that the Agenda is a non-binding agreement, the Member States choose voluntarily which targets to implement and how. There is space for member States to align the SDGs with their national priorities, thereby having the option to not implement targets for ideological and religious reasons, which can already be a setback for the fulfillment of the Agenda.

The third concern refers to the misalignment between the international and national timeframes and the capacity for governments to start implementing the SDGs in 2016. This misalignment is already visible when the "how's" of the Agenda implementation and monitoring is still being discussed in the first year of the implementation. Also, the misalignment between the emerging issues and political processes where other stakeholders, namely financial institutions and the markets, can react immediately to a crisis better than the national governments or international organizations.

Lastly, an NGO member recalled during an informal meeting organized by ECOSOC with civil society representatives, that the issues related to women are

decided by women via UN Women<sup>27</sup>, and that for issues related with children and youth, the UN Major Group for Children and Youth<sup>28</sup> is invited to participate. The representative then drew attention to the fact that the poor and most vulnerable are still uninvited to the debate and negotiation tables. Without detracting from the extensive consultations made for 2030 Agenda, the representative considered that having to speak through representatives is not the same as having the actual subjects of the development policies at the table, putting into perspective the motto of the 2030 Agenda 'leave no one behind'.

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<sup>27</sup> The United Nations Women is the UN entity for gender Equality and the empowerment of women. The agency was created in 2010 with the merging of the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

<sup>28</sup> The UN Major Group for Children and Youth intends to allow the meaningful participation of children and youth and their organizations, networks and committees at all levels – local to international – in decision-making on sustainable development within the UN.

### **3. My Internship: a Personal View**

The internship carried out at the Portuguese Mission at the United Nations for the period of 800h, under the supervision of the diplomat Dr. Jorge Castelbranco, offered me the opportunity to witness the daily life of the organization while being part of key meetings related with the 2030 Agenda and the post-2015 framework for development [see Appendix, Figure 5, p. 64].

The experience allowed me to develop my capacity of synthesis by having to debrief Dr. Castelbranco after each meeting orally or via a written report, where I had to learn the reporting language for a diplomatic telegram. It also increased my knowledge of the issues that are currently more important to the Portuguese Mission, such as all subjects related with the Portuguese speaking countries and Europe current pressing issues like refugees and migrants.

Dr. Castelbranco is currently the only Portuguese representative at the Second Committee, which enabled me to take on relevant functions and work on important meetings with some level of independence. The Committee deals with issues relating to economic growth and development such as macroeconomic policy questions (including international trade, international financial system, external debt sustainability and commodities), financing for development, sustainable development, human settlements, poverty eradication, globalization and interdependence, operational activities for development, and information and communication technologies for development. The Committee also considers issues relating to groups of countries in special situations - such as the LDCs and the LLDCs. It is the main committee in charge of the issues related with the 2030 Agenda.

During my five months at the Mission, I assisted Dr. Castelbranco by going to meetings and reporting back in a written document that he would later review and send to Portugal. I was also required to be in contact with UN agencies and other diplomatic missions at the UN to inquire on issues related to the Second Committee, as well as translation and synthesis of UN Reports related with the 2030 Agenda, to

assist in the application and speeches made by former Portuguese prime-minister Dr. António Guterres vying for the position of Secretary-General of the UN.

I closely followed four main areas: 1) Meetings related with the 2030 Agenda – from the FUR process, to dialogues on implementation and the process of choosing and adopting the SDGs indicators; 2) The ECOSOC Dialogue on longer-term positioning of the UNDS; 3) The Midterm Review (MTR) of the Istanbul Plan of Action (IPoA) for the LDCs as well as negotiations for its political declaration; and 4) The Habitat III - Quito Conference along with the negotiations on the New Urban Agenda (NUA) to be adopted in Quito.

I also followed the intense negotiations of the Commission on Population and Development (CPD) 49<sup>th</sup> session and the preparatory process for the 2016 Financing for Development Forum.

I was present in the preparations to establish the Technology Facilitation Mechanism (TFM), called by the AAAA, and the Development Cooperation Forum (DCF). I also had the opportunity to be present in some of the negotiating meetings of the Decade of Action on Nutrition, the Global Road Safety initiative, and a meeting at the Security Council on the conflict situation in Mali at the request of diplomat Dr. João Serrão Lopes.

I actively participated in meetings at UNGA, such as the 2016 High-level Meeting on Ending AIDS [see Appendix, Figure 6, p. 64], but most of the meetings I attended took place in ECOSOC, Trusteeship Council and other smaller conference rooms.

In brief, as a member of the European Union (EU), I also frequently attended the European Union Delegation (EUDEL) coordination meetings, where the EU countries discuss and decide the joint position of the group before the meetings at the UN HQ.

### **3.1. 2030 Agenda**

In February, shortly after my arrival, I attended a briefing by the IAEG on the SDGs at the EUDEL when the set of indicators was not yet finalized and the team was still defining the group of final indicators and obtaining all the available data about each indicator.

In March, during a three-day conference for the forty-seventh session of the Statistical Commission, the IAEG proposed the list of indicators that was approved. I did not participate in any other SDG indicators meeting following the approval, but was apprised and thereby kept up to date since it was a recurring theme at all 2030 Agenda related meetings. Frequently, Member States and UN agencies expressed concerns over the indicators and the huge amount of data collection and data disaggregation necessary for the 230 global indicators approved.

Besides the quantity of data that still need to be produced, while the 2030 Agenda is already in progress, the disaggregation, quality and reliability of the data is also a huge task to take on. LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS, the most vulnerable countries and those that should not be left behind, may not have enough capacity to take on that task. ‘Capacity building’ is an expression frequently referred to within this topic, but little was said about concrete measures to help countries in special situations overcome their shortfalls.

Bearing in mind that the 230 indicators approved are for global monitoring, Member States are encouraged to create their own national indicators that are readily adapted to their context. However, in terms of data collection, the countries will have an arduous task having to collect data for both the global and national indicators.

The FUR process was also an on-going theme during my internship. The first meeting of note, which focused primarily on the monitoring of the 2030 Agenda, was held on February 5<sup>th</sup> where the Member States expressed their concerns over the report of the Secretary-General on the critical milestones towards coherent, efficient and inclusive follow-up and review at the global level. It was referred by Member States that the report did not have sufficient procedural instructions on the revision of the SDGs. During the next months Member States, the UNDS and other stakeholders engaged in dialogue in FUR process with the conclusions expressed on the Chapter 2.3.2.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> The SDGs will be reviewed in a four-year cycle in the HLPF, under the auspice of ECOSOC. The HLPF will be the annual stage for reviewing the SDGs prior to the quadrennial meeting at the UNGA. At the

My internship also allowed for some involvement in the negotiations leading to the FUR draft, co-facilitated by Ib Petersen, Permanent Representative (PR) of Denmark, and Lois M. Young, PR of Belize. It commenced with informal informals<sup>30</sup> on the general ideas and discussion of the possibilities for the FUR process before the production of the zero draft of a UNGA resolution leading to the informal consultations in which both Member States and other stakeholders were invited to give their input.

After the zero draft in early May, the meetings evolved into negotiations, paragraph by paragraph, in which I participated in one of the negotiating session at the end of May. For these negotiations, the co-facilitators invited the UN Major Groups and other stakeholders to contribute to the process with proposals and recommendations, knowing that the negotiations were an intergovernmental process. The Russia Federation opposed to the hearing of non Member States on the FUR process considering that the negotiations were purely intergovernmental and consultations with stakeholders would not be possible if not specified in the resolution and modalities of work of a UNGA meeting. Nonetheless, the co-facilitators decided that the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and UN Major Groups should be heard, decision that was openly supported by the representatives of Australia, Canada, EUDEL, Norway, and Switzerland.

The reaction of the Russian Federation along with the silence of many other Member States, made me question how willing those countries are to take on the task of implementing the new agenda for sustainable development, that is highly dependent on good governance both at local, national, regional and global level, together with the private sector, government, other stakeholders. The partnerships with non governmental stakeholders are a fundamental part of the agenda, namely in terms of financing and implementation, and as such if there is no continuous dialogue with them the Agenda is more likely to fail.

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end of the cycle, two HLPFs will be convened - UNGA and ECOSOC - being that ECOSOC will feed UNGA with the assessments of the four-year cycle.

<sup>30</sup> Informal informals is the first step in the negotiations processes at the UN, where the chairs or co-facilitators of the negotiations convene discussions among interested delegations to develop the zero draft.

### 3.2. ECOSOC Dialogue on Longer-term Positioning of the UNDS

I arrived at the UN during the ECOSOC formal session 6, of phase 2, of the ECOSOC Dialogue on longer-term positioning of the UNDS [see Appendix, Figure 7, p. 65]. At the end of February I went to the first meeting of the Dialogue on the “Organizational arrangements: How to strengthen interagency collaboration in organizational presence at country, sub regional and regional levels” where the regional dimension was discussed for the first time in the context of the QCPR.

I also took part in the workshop 5 on functions and impact, and funding; workshop 6 on governance and partnership approaches, and organizational arrangements and capacity; and workshop 7 that discussed emerging interlinkages between the six ECOSOC Dialogue areas and options/proposals emerging from the workshops.

The above ECOSOC workshops were the most interesting meetings I had the chance to participate in. The hearing of members of ITA, representatives of agencies and other international institutions, private sector, entrepreneurs, and civil society, that presented concrete proposals and ideas, felt like a breath of fresh air where political and economical interests were not as pronounced. Their contributions were helpful not only to the reforming of the UNDS, but also to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda by providing information on projects that proved to work in specific situations and could be expanded to other regions or applied in different contexts.

Within the findings of the ECOSOC Dialogue on longer-term positioning of the UNDS I would like to stress the following:

- First and foremost, the need to define UNDS and map its agencies, funds and programmes with their specific roles and functions;
- The need to review the criteria to qualify as a ‘middle-income country’ (MIC), since the group is diverse in size, population and income level. According to the World Bank, middle-income countries represent around one third of global GDP, but they also host 73% of the world’s poorest<sup>31</sup>. The current criteria for MIC, which is based solely on the GNI (Gross National Income) per

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<sup>31</sup> For more information on the category of ‘middle-income country’ visit <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/mic/overview> – Retrieved September 9, 2016.

capita, restrains the country access to ODA even though the country might still present a high contrast in the distribution of income and other development related factors. In the Adriana Abdenur (2016) report for DESA, it is suggested using of the concept ‘middle development countries’ instead so that the level of development is more accurately reflected, since MICs still need special support to consolidate and advance the development reached<sup>32</sup>;

- Also the need to review the graduation criteria for the LDCs, with improved support for the newly graduated countries that loose much of the resources that led them to graduate before the development is consolidated sometimes leading to the regression of the development achieved;
- The need to review the poverty indexes utilized by the UNDS, with emphasis on multidimensional indexes taking into account the levels of education, housing quality, health, employment and social inclusion;
- The need for more technical support on behalf of the UN, taking advantage of the leverage the organization has with expertise and the existing UN country teams;
- The need for more country specific policies associated with capacity building and national ownership in the implementation of the development programmes. As well as more coordination between the UN HQ and the UN Country Teams;
- The need for more predictable and flexible funding of the UNDS, taking into account the needs and priorities of the receiving country. The funding should also be demand driven instead of donor driven, with the investment in multisectoral and multidimensional partnerships to support the implementation of development programmes;
- The need of effective monitoring and reviewing of development programmes, including the financing of the same;
- Finally, the need for more integration and cooperation between the humanitarian, peace and security, and development pillars of the UN.

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<sup>32</sup> For more information on the purposed ‘middle development countries’ read the 2016 “Delivering the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: The role of the UN development system in Middle-Income Countries” report by Adriana Abdenur.



### 3.3. ECOSOC Integration Segment

From the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 4<sup>th</sup> of May I also took part in the ECOSOC Integration Segment under the theme “Implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through Policy Innovation and Integration”. The Segment provided a unifying platform for dialogue and exchange of views on lessons learned and recommendations on ways forward while facilitating discussions between Member States, the UN system and other relevant stakeholders.

During the three days, the Segment offered policy recommendations to guide the implementation of the 2030 Agenda with presentations by members of government, private sector and academia, under five discussion panels focusing on integration and innovation policies in the context of the 2030 Agenda.

The ECOSOC Dialogue was another opportunity to listen to concrete measures and policies that can be implemented to achieve the SDGs and to observe how other stakeholders see the role of the UN as a facilitator of development during the next years. From the conclusions of the conference I would like to highlight:

- The need to disseminate the SDGs with the engagement of local communities and authorities. An example of how this could be done happened with the recording of a special edition of the radio show “My Perfect Country”, broadcasted by BBC UK, where inspiring policies and initiatives were featured. The decriminalization of all drugs by Portugal by approaching the drug issue as a health problem instead of criminal problem was highlighted;
- The need for quality and available data to overcome institutional and policy challenges in order to better respond to the needs of the populations. Capacity building in the collection and treatment of data was considered indispensable but the workshops were not clear on specific measures to achieve it;
- The need for a top-down, via political leadership, and bottom-up approach, via involvement of the populations, in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. It was suggested that local authorities can play a big role in the support of citizens initiatives and projects and can help establishing the link with the political leaders;

- And the need to explore new and existing digital technologies to implement and monitor the 2030 Agenda to promote greater inclusion, efficiency and innovation. For example, governments can take advantage of new technologies to create online platforms to provide state services and increase efficiency. Also, governments and other institutions can create online spaces where citizens can contribute with ideas for development policies and raise awareness for emergent issues, while supplying information to the FUR process.

### **3.4. Midterm Review of The Istanbul Plan Of Action**

From January to May I followed the preparations for the Midterm Review conference for the IPoA that targets the LDCs. The conference took place in Antalya, Turkey from 27-29 May 2016. The conference undertook a comprehensive review of the implementation of the programme and the development partners and intended to reaffirm the global commitment to address the special needs of the LDCs via a political declaration.

The first meetings consisted of briefings, usually chaired by UN-OHRLS<sup>33</sup> and a representative from Turkey, about the location of the conference and the arrangements for high-level political representation by Member States. I was in charge of debriefing the information back to Portugal to guarantee the timely application to the MTR of the IPoA and travel arrangements for the Portuguese political representation at the conference.

The following segment of meetings focused on the negotiation of the political declaration for the conference. The text was negotiated via intergovernmental informal meetings in a process co-facilitated by Benedicte Frankinet, PR of Belgium, and Jean-Francis Zinsou, PR of the Republic of Benin. Mathieu Rémond, EUDEL delegate, led the process of negotiation in the name of the European Union Member States after the joint position was negotiated.

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<sup>33</sup> The United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and the Small Island Developing Countries. For more information access <http://unohrlls.org/> - Retrieved September 9, 2016.

The meetings can be organized in three different moments, after each meeting the co-facilitators present a revised draft. The first set of meetings gathered the general ideas on what Member States wanted to see implemented in the political declaration.

The second set of meetings, also my favorite, implied the review paragraph-by-paragraph, line-by-line and word-by-word, of the proposed outcome document. Listening to the specific comments made by each Member State, taught me that the perspectives of each country on the issues of development can be observed through the analyze of the concepts and issues they approve or refuse to see in the outcome document. For these meetings I ended up developing a 'code system' to signal the requested changes on the text [see Appendix, Figure 8, p. 66], that I would later gather in a document to synthesize the main topics of disagreement between the Member States.

The last set of meetings was composed of bilateral negotiations to agree on the more problematic issues. The divergences were mainly in graduation criteria for the LDCs, ODA and development partners, issues related to women such as empowerment and gender-based violence, and the operationalization of the Technology Bank for the LDCs called to be created in the 2011 IPoA.

After long and hard negotiations, the text was agreed *ad referendum* seven days before the conference, with a lot of 'recalling', 'reiterating', 'recognizing' and only one 'deciding' and some 'we will'.

### **3.5. Habitat III**

My role at Habitat III was similar to the one at IPoA. Habitat III Conference in Quito (Ecuador) is set to happen from October 17<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> but the preparations have been going on since 2014 with the PrepCom1 conference in New York, PrepCom2 in 2015 in Nairobi, and PrepCom3 in July 2016 in Surabaya.

The conference was also preceded by a number of regional and thematic high-level meetings, and informal hearings with local authorities and other stakeholders. Just like with the ECOSOC Dialogue and the Integration Segment, I found the informal hearings very productive. The local authorities' hearings were especially

valuable in this context, since the management of the cities and the urban landscaping is often of their competence and a lot of expertise and experience was brought to the table.

During the preparatory meetings, hearings and events, I was in charge of debriefing the Portuguese mission on the next steps, events, applications and deadlines as well as policy recommendations and proposals that were discussed in the hearings.

I was also part of the first set of intergovernmental meetings to negotiate the outcome document of the Habitat III – Quito Declaration in May and June, after the submission of the zero draft. There were divergences between the Group of 77 plus China (G77)<sup>34</sup> and EUDEL and the ‘like-minded’ countries in the approach to the outcome document. However, since the negotiations happened in closed-door meetings<sup>35</sup> I cannot refer to the specific frictions between the delegations.

From the first three days of intergovernmental negotiations, a new Zero Draft was produced by the co-facilitators and was further negotiated in Surabaya PrepCom3, the hopes were that Member States would arrive in Quito with a concise, action-oriented, forward-looking and universal framework of actions for sustainable urban development.

### **3.6. Commission on Population and Development**

Even though I didn’t follow the full negotiations for the CPD it seems important to mention that these were the most difficult negotiations I took part in, due to serious divergences on both the methods of work and the provisional agenda for the 50<sup>th</sup> session (2017).

The negotiations took place in closed-door meetings, which once again restricts the information I can relay. However, I can say that there were disagreements in the inclusions of paragraphs related to sexual and reproductive rights and LGBT rights.

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<sup>34</sup> Frequently Member States align their statements with the statement delivered by regional groups or coalitions within the UN. That is the case of G77, EUDEL, CARICOM (Caribbean Community), AOSIS (Alliance of Small Island States), and others.

<sup>35</sup> Closed-door meetings are small group conversations held privately, usually called because of specific issues that are disputed among the participating parties.

The discord stalled the negotiations for some hours in each session of negotiation in an almost tragically comical way where there were intense arguments within several delegations about issues I thought no longer would receive resistance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and especially after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda.

Both the resolution on the methods of work and the decision on the provisional agenda for the 50<sup>th</sup> session were agreed on, but with numerous changes and cuts from the zero and subsequent revised drafts.

## Conclusion

Globalization, together with the unprecedented challenges of environmental threats, rapid population growth putting pressure on natural resources and problems associated with the world's economics and social inclusion, has led to the need of a new approach to try to solve or to address the development problems of the world.

The MDGs, as a major first attempt to address the above issues, have produced significant results. But the 2030 Agenda presents itself as a better reflection of the concerns and priorities of a changed and globalized world, where sustainable development is seen as the only viable path to address those same concerns. It was in the interest of creating a new, people-centered, planet sensitive development agenda, pledging to 'leave no one behind', that the United Nations made a set of changes:

- Defined a different method to set the agenda, with wide consultation with the civil society, international organizations, scientists, academics, the private sector and other relevant stakeholders from around the world;
- Has a more universal approach, by targeting all countries and not mainly the poorer ones, bearing in mind the idea of shared responsibility for world development;
- Applied the principle of indivisibility and interconnectedness as a response to a globalized world, creating the opportunity for multisectoral partnerships considering multiple agents of development;
- Has a more holistic approach, having extended the issues of development by addressing economic growth, environmental protection, peace, justice and accountability, while continuing to address poverty, hunger, health and education.

Despite the efforts to readjust to the new challenges of the world and to push forward development worldwide, the five months of internship at the Portuguese Mission allowed me to confirm what Browne and Weiss considered as weaknesses of the UN system (referred in chapter 1.2.) and emphasized the identification of other concerns related with the reform of the UNDS and the adaptation to the 2030 Agenda framework.

First, the absence of concrete proposals attached to policies. It was clear that the Secretariat and Member States understand the need for reform. However it was also evident that the concepts voiced by participants in almost every meeting lacked pragmatism. Ideas such as 'avoid duplication of work and parallel processes'; 'create an integrated approach'; 'more capacity building'; 'a revitalized global partnership for sustainable development'; 'use multi-stakeholder partnerships'; and 'streamline organization structure'. The 'how's' to achieve these ideas were not consensual and were yet to be defined.

Second, the complexity and bureaucracy within the UN development system. Two of the main goals of the UNDS reform are to avoid duplication of work and have a coherent system of follow-up and review of the implemented programmes, both interlinked. It will be difficult to monitor the programmes when there is an overlap of projects. For example, the MTR of the IPoA pretended to evaluate the achievements of the programme, however the LDCs development is due not only to the application of the IPoA but also the MDGs and other ongoing development programs, including country specific programmes and national plans for development.

Third, it was noticeable that there was a power struggle between the UN agencies and the Member States. The agencies are mandated by the Member States, and one of the more prevalent topics currently is the restructure of mandates, which may create losses in job positions, funding and power within the agencies, with the possible merging or elimination of agencies, departments and funds. Member States and regional groups can also see themselves involved in these power struggles, with some wanting to give more mandates to the agencies and others rethinking if the agency mandate is even necessary. This competition enables the UN to become a more cohesive organization that can 'deliver as one'.

Fourth, it was also clear that the positions within the UN were divided into two big groups. On one side there was the EU and the so-called 'like minded countries', which includes USA, Canada, Australia and Japan. And the G77, composed of 131 Member States that encompasses almost all the southern hemisphere countries. Even though the group has deep ideological divisions amongst its members, the

opposition between the two UN groups reflects the North-South and Developed-Developing geographical, historical and ideological dichotomy. The opinions of these groups diverge on the approach to humanitarian assistance, to development, on functions of the agencies, amongst others topics, mirroring that the nations from the global South can now challenge the dominance of the Western donor governments (Zakaria, 2014) after decades of dependency.

Fifth, the importance of the politicization issue within the UN, where the process is more important than the product, and where getting to an agreed text is seen as a sufficient criterion for success however lackluster the result (Browne & Weiss, 2016) cannot be stressed enough. It is plain to view when big players like the Russian Federation and the Republic of China oppose the interventions of NGOs and UN Major Groups in several meetings and negotiation, also when other Member States oppose to the involvement of local authorities in the negotiations processes. Both these positions seem to go against what was agreed to in the 2030 Agenda that considers other stakeholders as a fundamental piece in the implementation process of the Agenda since they are more readily equipped to deal with local realities and context specific policies.

Lastly, funding is one of the most common discussion topics and it exposes once again the North-South dichotomy. Besides the problem of co-optation and earmarked funding that highly constricts the UNDS actions, developing countries, LDCs and LLDCs continue to request ODA as the main source for development within the traditional North-South cooperation. On the other hand, developed countries have been pushing towards a blended public and private financing, South-South and triangular (South-North-South) cooperation, capacity building and national ownership via combat of illicit financial flows, tax evasion and corruption (UNGA, 2015b).

Recognizing the problems within the UN system, Secretary-General Kofi Annan requested the establishment of a High-level Panel on the UN System-wide Coherence in 2006. The outcome report put forward recommendations on how to overcome the fragmentation of the United Nations so that the system could 'deliver as one', in efforts to achieve the MDGs and other internationally agreed



development goals. And even though the proposals are still pertinent, the implementation of the recommendations has been slow. One of the suggestions that was implemented and showed promising signs of streamlining the work of the UN was the merging of major institutional entities to form UN Women in July 2010.

With most of the 2006 recommendations yet to be implemented, and a new development framework, ECOSOC led the main forum to make the UNDS fit for purpose and it can be considered as a third attempt to reform the system. The initiatives reflect that Member States recognize that the UN is not 'fit for purpose' but the lack of results after the 1969 Capacity Study initiated by Paul Hoffmann and the Kofi Annan initiative are not encouraging the belief that this time the UN system, and more concretely the UNDS, will be reformed *de facto*.

Nonetheless there is the hope that the forthcoming election for Secretary-General is a chance to bring forward a reformer that can have the vision and the ability to work with the Member States and the Secretariat by assisting in translating ideas into practice.

Finally, my internship experience highlighted the complexity of all the UN processes and how non-user friendly they are. The amount of parallel processes, many with duplication of work, gathered with the hundreds of acronyms used, makes it hard for any experienced UN delegate to keep track of their work. Many of the diplomats I met throughout the five months expressed a deep frustration with the pace of the decision-making, the bureaucracy and the power struggles that did not aim for development. The frustration was also heightened within the smaller missions with only one or two delegates assigned to the Second Committee. The intense workload is such that at times missions are forced to choose to attend one meeting over another, making the job of interns fundamental to allow missions to cover the maximum of topics discussed.

One night at the Delegates Lounge, on the second floor of the UN HQ, a diplomat from Uruguay told me that we [diplomats] are all clowns doing circus juggling at the UN. The parallel he established between the diplomats and the clowns was reminiscent of the Swedish contemporary artist Ann Edholm, whose work "Dialogos" is featured as the background curtain for the ECOSOC Chamber

since 2013. “Dialogos” resembles a circus tent [see Appendix, Figure 9, p. 67].

It is undeniable that the United Nations have played a critical role in development in the last decades and that the setting of the 2030 Agenda is a demonstration that the UN and its Member States are willing to push forward to achieve more and improved results in the area of development. However, as noted by Albuquerque and Teles, regardless of the explanations for the failure and slow reform process, “it is certain that it is becoming more urgent and essential for the Organization to change” (1999/2000, 5).

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## **9. Official Webpages**

### **UN Agencies, Major Groups and Programmes**

DESA <https://www.un.org/development/desa/>

UNDG <https://undg.org/>

UNDP <http://www.undp.org/>

UNEP <http://www.unep.org/>

UN Habitat <http://unhabitat.org/>

UNICEF <http://www.unicef.org/>

UNODC <https://www.unodc.org/>

UN Women <http://www.unwomen.org/>

MGCY <http://childrenyouth.org/>

World Food Programme <http://www.wfp.org/>

### **UN Main Organs**

ECOSOC <https://www.un.org/ecosoc/>

Secretariat <http://www.un.org/en/sections/about-un/secretariat/index.html>

UNGA <http://www.un.org/en/ga/>

**UN Processes and Agreements**

Habitat III <https://www.habitat3.org/>

Integration Segment <http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/integration/>

Millennium Development Goals <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>

Midterm Review Istanbul Plan of Action <http://www.ipoareview.org/>

QCPR 2016 <https://www.un.org/ecosoc/en/content/2016>

Sustainable Development Goals <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/>

Sustainable Development Goals Indicators <http://unstats.un.org/sdgs/>

World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction <http://www.wcdrr.org/>

**Other Institutions**

International Monetary Fund <http://www.imf.org/>

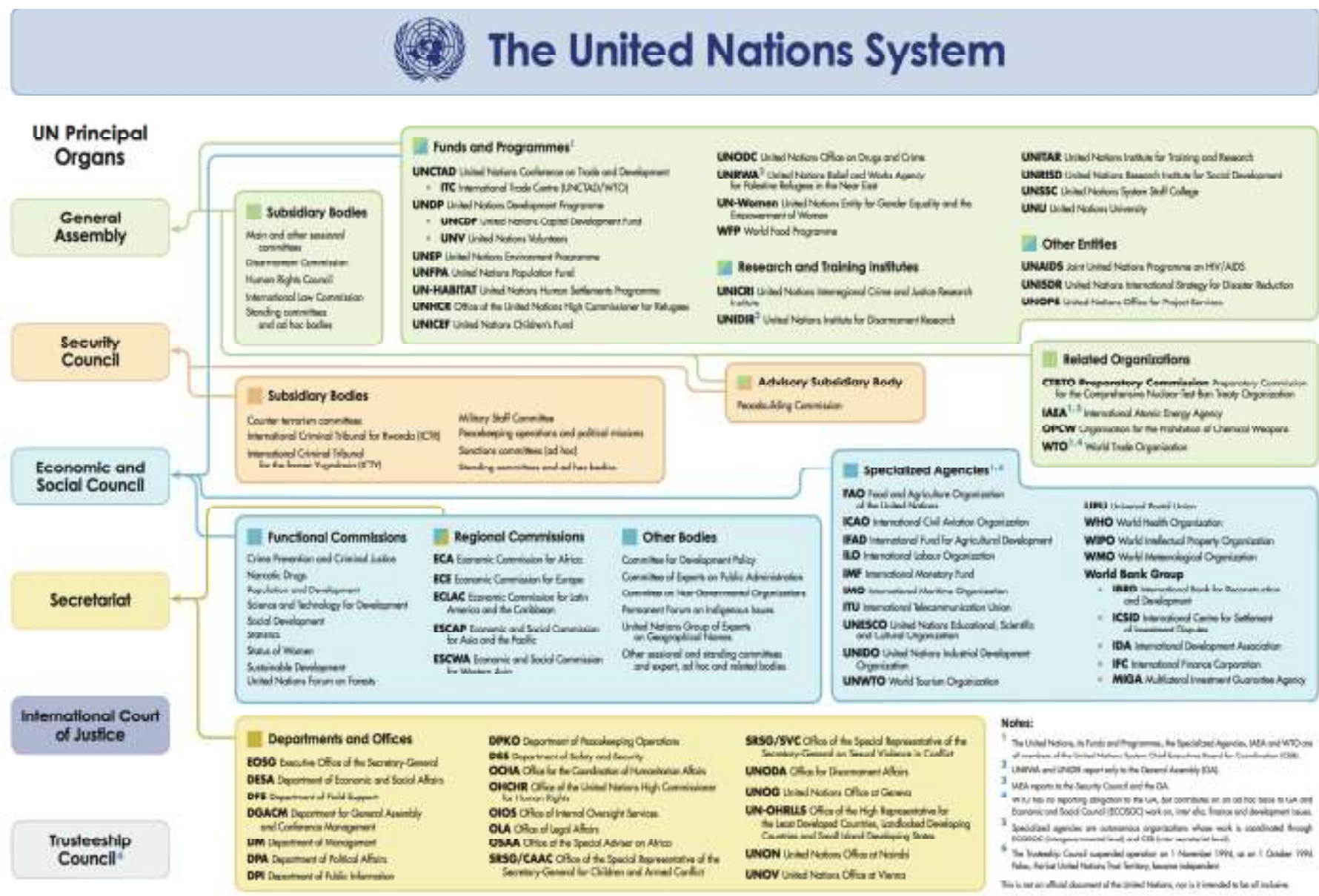
International Bank for Reconstruction and Development

<http://www.worldbank.org/en/about/what-we-do/brief/ibrd>

## Appendix

**Figure 1 - The United Nations System**

Reprinted from UNFPA. Retrieved August 19, 2016 from [http://www.unfpa.org/resources/united-nations-systempdf/UN%20system%20chart\\_11x17\\_color\\_2013.pdf](http://www.unfpa.org/resources/united-nations-systempdf/UN%20system%20chart_11x17_color_2013.pdf)



## Figure 2 - United Nations Development System

Reprinted from “ECOSOC Dialogue on the longer-term positioning of the UN Development System in the Context of the Post-2015 Development Agenda - Phase 1: December 2014 – May 2015”, by DESA & Office for ECOSOC Support, 2015. Retrieved August 19, 2016 from [http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/qcpr/pdf/desa\\_paper\\_functions.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/qcpr/pdf/desa_paper_functions.pdf)

The United Nations Development System is defined as the entities that receive contributions for operational activities for development.

In 2013, the following 34 entities engaged in operational activities for development.

*Funds and programmes:* UNDP (incl. UNCDF, UNV), UN-Women, UNFPA, UNICEF, WFP, UNHCR, UNAIDS, UNCTAD (incl. ITC), UNEP, UN-Habitat, UNODC, UNRWA

*Specialized agencies:* FAO, IAEA, UNESCO, ICAO, ILO, IMO, ITU, UNIDO, UPU, WIPO, WHO, WMO, UNWTO

*Regional commissions:* ECA, ECE, ECLAC, ESCAP, ESCWA

*Secretariat departments:* OCHA, DESA

*Other entities:* IFAD, OHCHR

Legislative mandates established in the *QCPR resolution* of the GA on operational activities for development are formally binding for those entities that report to the Assembly and ECOSOC. In 2012, these were 27 entities (30 if UNCDF, UNV (part of UNDP) and ITC (part of UNCTAD and WTO) are counted as specific entities):

- 12 funds and programmes: UNDP (including UNCDF, UNV), UNICEF, UNFPA, WFP, UNHCR, UNODC, UNCTAD (including ITC), UNRWA, UN-Women, UNEP, UN Habitat, UNAIDS;
- 6 research and training institutions: UNICRI, UNIDIR, UNITAR, UNRISD, UNSSC, UNU (although none of them is involved in operational activities);
- 5 regional commissions which formally report to ECOSOC: ECLAC, ESCWA, ESCAP, ECA and ECE;
- 2 Secretariat departments: OCHA and UNDESA, and
- 2 other entities: UNISDR and UNOPS (UNISDR doesn't engage in operational activities and UNOPS only implements operational activities initiated by other entities).

Of the above 27 entities, 19 engaged in operational activities in 2013. The 8 entities that did not engage in such activities were: 6 above research and training institutions and UNISDR and UNOPS. Together, the 19 entities accounted for some 75 per cent of total operational activities for development in 2012 and the specialized agencies for the remaining 25 per cent.



**Figure 3 - Millennium Development Goals**

Reprinted from UN. Retrieved August 19, 2016 from <http://www.un.org/>



**Figure 4 – Sustainable Development Goals**

Reprinted from UN. Retrieved August 19, 2016 from <http://www.un.org/>



Figure 5 – United Nations Delegates Pass



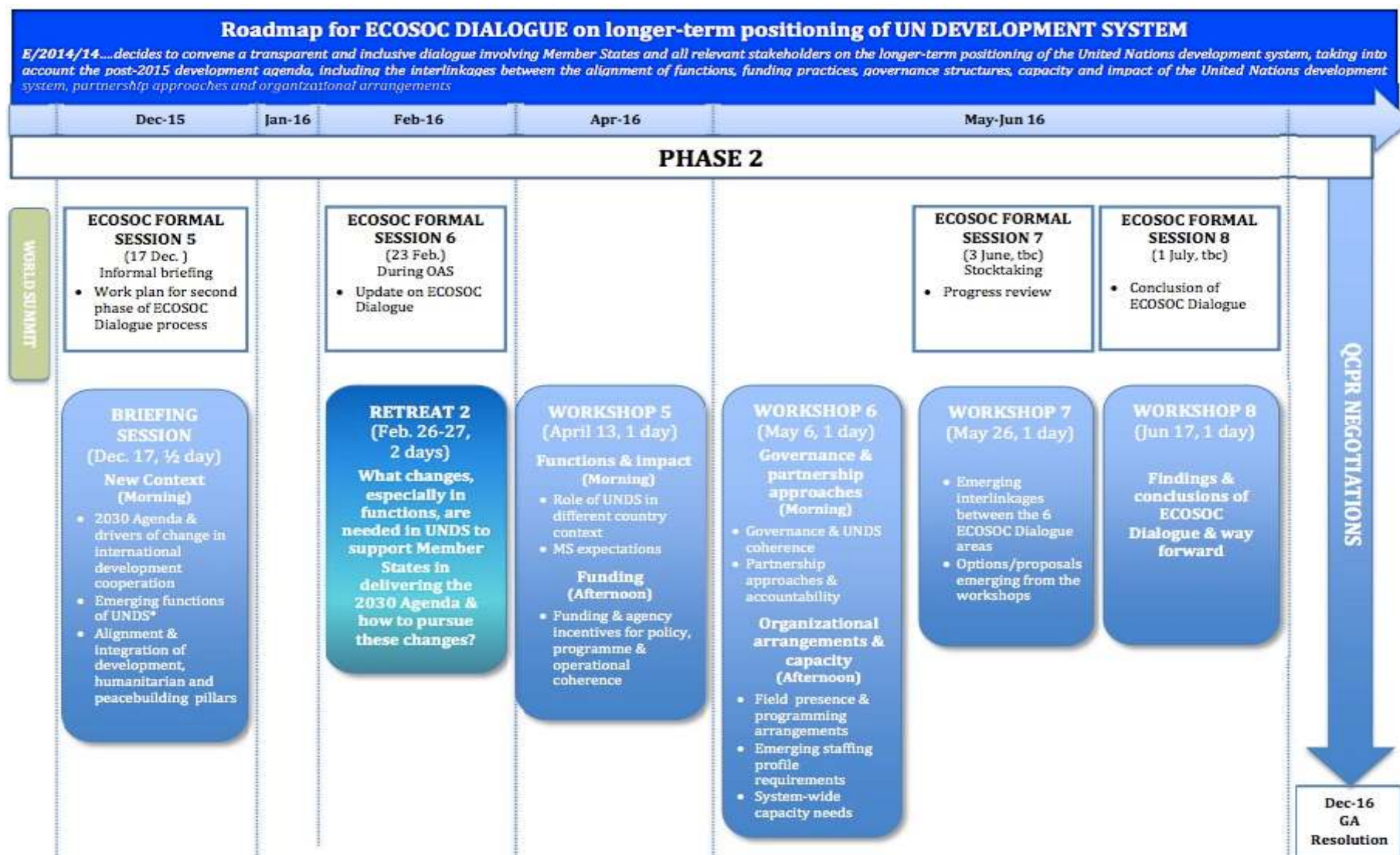
Figure 6 – Meeting at UNGA






**Figure 7 – ECOSOC Dialogue on longer-term positioning of the UNDS**

Reprinted from ECOSOC. Retrieved August 19, 2016 from [http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/qcpr/pdf/Dialogue\\_Roadmap\\_Phase\\_2.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/qcpr/pdf/Dialogue_Roadmap_Phase_2.pdf)




\* The emerging functions of UNDS will be a cross-cutting theme in ECOSOC Dialogue meetings and documentation.


Figure 8 - IPoA Negotiations, writings over Matrix 4 (24.04.2016)

development dis- and e 2030			 ↓
ation of full and and our policies aired to ainable est and ation-of larity-for	<u>G77</u> ⊕ tratamento preferencial sobre mercado, comércio, transfer tecnologia, etc ↳ <u>DEU</u> (digital action) → <u>EU</u> + valores +/-	The special focus on LDCs is part of the 2030 Agenda; no need to add an extra layer of focus.	- G77 espera conseguir tratamento preferencial para os LDC's ↳ <u>DEU</u> ⊕/⊖
duration ed and	+ PROPOSTA <u>G77</u>		<div>Formatted: Font: Not Italic, English (U.S.)</div>

	 <u>CANADA</u> & <u>EU</u>   1   <u>EU</u> → investment climate menos presente	
e 3 of 21	G77 tem tantas propostas 7 + varias apresentações em draft deles	

<u>G77</u> ⊕ <del>EU</del> <u>EU</u> ⊕ reproductive rights e <u>CANADA</u> ✓ ↳ <u>SANTA SE</u>	 <u>HOU SEE</u> ↳ reserva "gr"
↳ <u>B.4</u> <u>CANADA</u>	
<u>AD REF</u> ⊕ ⊕ <u>14.2</u> <u>CANADA</u>	

**Figure 9 - Ann Edholm curtain 'Dialogos' at ECOSOC Chamber, UN**

Reprinted from Public Art Agency Sweden. Retrieved August 19, 2016 from <http://www.statenskonstrad.se/en/konst/dialogos>



**Table 1 – Millennium Development Goals**

From UNGA, 2000, United Nations Millennium Declaration. *Resolution adopted by the General Assembly*, 18 September, A/RES/55/2

<b>Goal 1</b>	Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
<b>Goal 2</b>	Achieve universal primary education
<b>Goal 3</b>	Promote gender equality and empower women
<b>Goal 4</b>	Reduce child mortality rates
<b>Goal 5</b>	Improve maternal health
<b>Goal 6</b>	Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases
<b>Goal 7</b>	Ensure environmental sustainability
<b>Goal 8</b>	Develop a global partnership for development

**Table 2 – Sustainable Development Goals**

From UNGA, 2015, Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. *Resolution adopted by the General Assembly*, 21 October, A/RES/70/1

<b>Goal 1</b>	End poverty in all its forms everywhere
<b>Goal 2</b>	End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture
<b>Goal 3</b>	Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages
<b>Goal 4</b>	Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
<b>Goal 5</b>	Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
<b>Goal 6</b>	Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
<b>Goal 7</b>	Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
<b>Goal 8</b>	Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all

**Table 2 (cont.)**

<b>Goal 9</b>	Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation
<b>Goal 10</b>	Reduce inequality within and among countries
<b>Goal 11</b>	Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
<b>Goal 12</b>	Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
<b>Goal 13</b>	Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
<b>Goal 14</b>	Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
<b>Goal 15</b>	Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification and halt and reverse land degradation, and halt biodiversity loss
<b>Goal 16</b>	Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
<b>Goal 17</b>	Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development